1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

fined to their homes. A man who does not frequently mix with his fellow men outside the house is branded as the 'man of the ...' while a woman who continually leaves her house is called 'strayer'. Men meet for their spontaneous gathering and gossip outside the house, while women meet inside. While women are expected to adorn themselves with earrings, nose rings, kohl for the eyes, finger rings, anklets, henna for the palms (almost an ornament for every sense), men are supposed to refrain. Moreover while men shave or cut their hair, women leave it to grow as long as possible and never cut it.[1] While men wear pants, women do not; while women's speech is usually sprinkled with words in the diminutive, men are not expected to follow this habit; while women carry things on their heads, men never do so, and only carry things either in the hands, or on the back or shoulders. On walking along the village streets and alleyways, women keep near the wall, while men walk in the middle of the street. Although both men and women are fond of dramatizing their speech, yet they have different stylized ways of doing this. While men use their index fingers as a sign of threatening, women point out with their middle finger. Women grasp their chin or slap their face with open palms for surprise or regret or shame, while men slowly clap their hands. On being angry or hurt, the woman's cry is 'Abouh, abouh . . .' and in joy her shrill cry is 'Wri, ri, ri . . .'. Men are not supposed to utter any cries of joy or anger. In threatening a man will threaten in default to cut off his moustache, while a woman threatens to cut off her head hair. Men and women use different invectives and imprecations as well as different greetings. Women in their speech draw out their words, whereas men end them abruptly. Women do not participate either in individual or communal worship in the mosque as they are excluded altogether from it, but there is no Koranic support for this. On the other hand, they are usually the performers of magico-religious rituals connected with averting the evil eye, bringing about pregnancy, or healing the sick; and men are less engaged in this sphere. It is also interesting to note that, as in Classical Arabic, the dialect of the village attached the feminine 'n' at the end of the verb in the third person feminine plural, a feature which does not occur in most of the urban dialects in Egypt.

Between men and women there is complete avoidance in looking at each other face to face, except in the case of certain kinships specified by the Koran. On meeting men in the street, women have always to turn their heads to one side, and pull their head covering across their face, and men are expected to lower their heads and not stare at women. The sex taboo on looking and talking without reserve does not apply to children till they reach the adolescent stage, when they gradually acquire such norms and begin to observe them as a part of their value system of politeness. On the other hand, very old women and men are freed from such restric-

[1] See Appendix VIII, for a boy who said that he would be ashamed if his hair grew long, presumably because it looks like that of girls.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

community marked with the lowest degree of isolation and homogeneity was characterized by the highest degree of individualization, secularization, and disorganization, and conversely.[1]

This hypothesis of the historical phases of culture change has stimulated other anthropologists to test it. Sol Tax, examining the hypothesis in the light of his Guatemalan data, was led to make a distinction between two aspects of culture that would cut across Redfield's framework. With regard to the world view and the beliefs about nature and man, the Guatemalan Indians are of the primitive type, while in their kind of social relations they are of the civilized type. He maintains that the interrelationships of the folk-life characteristics as found in Yucatan do not necessarily repeat themselves in every folk society. The Guatemalan Indians, unsophisticated, homogeneous in beliefs and practices, are mobile, having relationships of the impersonal type, with formal institutions dictating the acts of individuals, with familial organization weak, and with life secularized.[2]

It was also pointed out that Max Weber has shown how capitalistic commercialism could, and did, go hand in hand with piety in the case of the Protestants and the Puritans. Under certain conditions of literate, and at least partly urbanized, society, a culture may be both highly commercial and sacred as in the case of the Jewish history.[3]

In the light of these findings, Silwa community fits rather with Redfield's characteristics of the folk society. Silwa is a comparatively isolated community, as it lies at a distance of about thirty miles from both Edfu and Kom Ombo, the nearest urban centres to the north and south respectively, while more than seven hundred miles separates it from Cairo. On the other hand, it is less isolated than other village communities in the sense that there is a Post Office, a Railway Station (at which express trains do not stop), as well as a Police Station. It is also less isolated in that it has a weekly market, to which people from surrounding villages and traders from nearby towns come to buy and sell their goods.

The villagers are, on the whole, relatively immobile, a phenomenon that makes face to face relationships loom large in the folk society. The attachment to their locality is also associated with a sectional pride in their origin, which embraces the various villages of G'afra, and explains to them the differences between their customs and traditions and those of other regions. The villagers refer to themselves as well as to other Moslems by the term 'nation of Moslems' (ummat-al-muslimeen), and feel that they are Arabs first and foremost. One occasionally sees pictures of Imam Ali and his sons, Hassan and Hussein, Abu-zeid-al-Hilali, decorating some houses, especially of newly married couples. For the villagers, the world is

[1] Robert Redfield, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*, pp. 360, 362.
[2] Sol Tax, 'World View and Social Relations in Guatemala', in *American Anthropologist*, Vol. XLIII, 1941, pp. 27–42.
[3] Robert Redfield, 'The Folk Society', in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. LII, 1947, p. 308.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

classified into believers and non-believers, on the basis of the Moslem faith, and they are hardly aware of concepts like race or class.

Silwa is to be considered basically as a folk community to the extent that human relations are not only of the personal, face to face type, but also familial. Social behaviour and mutual obligations are built upon the family relationship pattern, with regard to age, sex and status. Family relations are extended outwards to include the whole range of the community, and kinship bonds are the moral force behind village cohesion and group solidarity. Marriage, for instance, has its preferential bias towards cousins and relatives, and is an undertaking that implies the bringing together of two families.

Together with the emphasis on the family, one adds, to specify the degree of folkhood in Silwa community, such items of behaviour as the observation of patriarchal authority and respect relationship between the old and the young, and the reciprocal rights and duties between kinsfolk.

Moreover, sanctity and sacred sanctions lie at the foundation of a great deal of human activities and behaviour in the village, and ideally the sacred not only prevails over the profane, but sanctions and to some extent directs it. According to the villagers' view, 'life on this earth is like a farm, the harvest of which will be reaped in the next world'. Social acts and value judgment are grouped into two main religious categories: haram (forbidden) and halal (allowed), two words which have a distinctively religious flavour. Alongside the sanction of 'ar (social shaming) the notion of haram is another strong sanction for condemning a person who violates any of the prescriptions of the Koran or any moral or social norm.

To introduce acts of piety or holy symbols into everyday life is the best means of producing 'baraka', to mention God's name at the beginning of the meal, to thank Him at the end of it, to elicit His help on travelling, to count by saying 'God is one, second to none, three, the Caliphs are four'—as such religious ritual invokes holiness—'baraka'. To engage in Koran reading and reciting and to be able to quote the sacred language of the Koran, the Tradition and the sayings of the pious ancestors, is a sublime and ennobling occupation. It is not surprising that the villagers' spirit is always captivated by the story of the woman who, whenever asked about any matter, always gave an answer by quoting from the Koran.[1]

Cleanliness is envisaged mainly, not in terms of absence of dirt, but as the removal or absence of things that bring about religious impurity. To be in a state of valid ablutions is cleanliness, while the opposite is filthiness—'nagasa'. Attendance to such matters is more important than being clean or dirty in the secular, hygienic sense. Lustration as prescribed by the Koran, to wash one's private parts after evacuation, renders one clean and ready for saying one's prayers and is necessary for reading, reciting, or even touching the Koran. After sexual intercourse, husband and wife are enjoined to take a bath in a prescribed way, otherwise they are unclean.

[1] See Appendix V for the full text of the story.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

the first two ceremonies, in covering the expenses incurred during the celebrations. It is known by the villagers that on such occasions one usually gains financially, as the person who is celebrating is paid back on one evening all that he had invested previously at different times, and thus it is a time for getting back one's savings.[1] Such reciprocal aid in these ceremonies does not make such enterprises a burdensome task in Silwa and in many other villages in the province of Aswan. This is different from the conditions obtaining in the province of Sharqiya. In 1940 Dr. Abbas Ammar reported that 11·8 of the indebtedness of the people of Sharqiya was due to expenses incurred on wedding celebrations.[2]

One often reads outright condemnation of such ceremonial celebrations which make many a fellah fall into debt. It must be remembered that the desire for the prestige connected with a sense of plenty as expressed in feasts and ceremonies is a natural human tendency. In this connection Freud says: 'A festival is a permitted, or rather an obligatory, excess, a solemn breach of a prohibition. . . . It is not that men commit the excess because they are feeling happy as a result of an injunction they have received. It is rather that excess is of the essence of a festival; the festive feeling is produced by the liberty to do what is as a rule prohibited.'[3]

It is not so important here whether one accepts Freud's argument or not; what is more vital is to realize that such ceremonial occasions provide the fellaheen with a healthy scope for the expressive elements in human behaviour and life in general, without which existence would become monotonous. To view such celebrations only as one of the main causes of the fellah's indebtedness, as some social reformers in Egypt do, ignores the social framework of valuations. Such ceremonies of circumcision, weddings, funerals, are occasions where the community gives reality to some of its social ideals and practices. They also act as a social mode of catharsis for the family and the individual concerned through which they acquire and satisfy what social psychologists call the 'sense of belonging' and the demands of group loyalty and morality.[4]

There is no doubt that the circumcision ceremony is a formal occasion for introducing the child into the wider circle of family relatives and to the whole village. This occasion is taken to express bonds of blood, affinal or friendly relationships between the family of the circumcised boy and other families. It is interesting to note that the boy's mother is the first and only female contributor in the announcement ceremony, and her contribution of corn, dates and sugar goes to the announcer. Other close relatives such as an uncle, or grandfather, have also to contribute on this

[1] This reminds the writer of one of Malinowski's findings showing that the ceremonial treatment of certain aspects of life, e.g. sex, crises of human existence, are more than the assertion of their social significance but also have a pragmatic value.

[2] Abbas M. Ammar, 'The People of Sharqiya', Ph.D. Thesis (Manchester University), 1940, pp. 428, 429.

[3] S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, London, 1950.

[4] See S. F. Nadel, *Foundations of Social Anthropology*, pp. 343–4.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

THE AIMS AND METHODS OF SOCIALIZATION IN SILWA

159 Girls' dreams reveal the images of being in danger of drowning in the canal, black jinns with frightening eyes following them, men beating them, and so on.[1]

776 Children also show fear of certain places believed to be inhabited by evil spirits, for example, deserted or ruined houses, deserted wells, spots where a murder was committed, some certain areas round the cemetery, a spot where a train ran down a person or an animal. It is believed by children and many adults that the person who meets a violent end will [775] reappear as a violent ghost—'sul' or 'marid'—haunting people at night and causing them harm by frightening them with its fiery eyes. A boy of twelve told me of this horrified feeling, when on an errand at night the 'sul' followed him, throwing stones at him, but it disappeared suddenly when the boy passed by a gathering of people on his way, as the 'sul' only appears to a person walking alone at night. Children are also warned against talking to or looking at their shadows, especially on moonlit nights, [828] as this might lead them to insanity. The girls are warned against looking [828] too much at their shadows at night or at their reflection in the mirror for fear of the same malady. To avoid evil spirits, however, children are told to recite the 'Fatiha' or any part of the Koran on passing near the haunted places. Charms are also held to protect children from such dangers.

154 In discussing these sources and manifestations of fear, especially those connected with the supernatural world, one cannot ignore the psychoanalytical interpretation which considers spirits and demons as projections of repressed aggressive tendencies against beloved persons. The writer is inclined to explain children's fears and their genuine belief in the existence of ogresses and bogies in the village as a projection of repressed hostile attitudes towards their parents or other members of the family.[2]

•571 In this connection, one is tempted to ask the question: to what extent does the incentive of fear as a motive, so much emphasized in the village, affect the undercurrent trends of the social relationship between the villagers? The tension and suspicion discerned in the interpersonal relationships epitomized in the saying that 'every man has an enemy' could be related to the excess in resorting to both fear and rivalry motives in 773 the bringing up of children. The favourite legendary figure of 'Jiha' is liked by both children and adults, because of his trickery and cunning that always enables him to take revenge.[3] It could also be suggested that 154 this anxiety and fear through which children are stimulated is partially

responsible for the adult defense mechanism of risk, TV and caution.

[1] See Appendix XI.

[2] S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, pp. 87, 140.

For a reference to the striking feelings of ambivalence of children towards their parents in primitive society, see M. Fortes, 'Parenthood in Primitive Society', where he says that as the parents in primitive societies are responsible for the passing on of cultural traditions, relations of children towards their parents tend to be ambivalent. There is commonly a feeling of hostility underlying the affection and gratitude of children felt towards their parents. *Man*, May 1952, p. 65.

[3] See Chapter VIII.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

CHILDREN'S TALES, THEIR TEXTS, ANALYSIS AND SIGNIFICANCE

*857
539

So far we have been chiefly concerned with analysis of tales mainly from a functional point of view, especially as data to be brought to bear on the socio-psychological problems of culture-personality. We have not exhausted the various ways of analysis of such oral traditions such as discerning a given motif, a tale type, a quality of inner experience, a sense of wonder and astonishment, and so forth.[1]

I

Once upon a time a cock witnessed the falling of the roof of a house, then the fox came along to enquire as to what happened, to which the cock replied, 'Can't you see?' Then came the wolf, who asked the fox about the matter, but the latter referred him to the cock saying that he himself did not know. Then came the tigress (daba) asking the wolf, who referred her to the fox, who referred her to the cock. Then came the silowa, who asked the tigress, who referred her to the wolf, who referred her to the fox, who referred her to the cock.[2]

II

There were once a goat, a cock, and a donkey who tended a farm together. One morning, on going together to the farm they discovered that the crops were eaten. As the goat and the cock were staying in the same house, they suspected the donkey of secretly eating the plants, but he denied it as he alleged he was lying sick in bed the night before. As they did not believe him they asked him to join them in taking a vow whilst jumping over the well. The cock crowed 'cock-a-doodle-do' and jumped over the well. The goat bleated 'na-na' whilst successfully jumping over the well. Then came the donkey braying 'hee-haw', but while he was jumping a wolf, who had lain hidden in the well, grabbed the donkey by the leg and gobbled him up.[3]

III

Three billy-goats were attacked by a wolf. Before he started tearing them to pieces to eat them, he asked the first billy-goat, 'What are these things sticking out of your head?' To which he answered, 'They are horns'. The wolf tore him apart and devoured him. Then the wolf asked the second one, 'What are these things sticking out of your head?' To which he answered, 'They are horns'. The same fate befell him. Then the wolf asked

[1] For a comprehensive survey of the various ways of analysis of folklore see E. J. Lindgren, op. cit. For a most stimulating analysis of 'The Oedipus Myth, and the fairy tale of Red Riding Hood', see E. Fromm, *The Forgotten Language*, London, 1952.

[2] Reflections of fear of committing oneself can be detected in this tale, an expression of the uneasy climate of interpersonal relations in the community.

[571]

[3] Apart from its manifest moral content, the latent content could be regarded as one with Oedipus reflections taking the donkey as the father, and the goat and cock as mother and child respectively.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

psychological factor. Professor Read has commented on scientists trained in the fields of agriculture, medicine, or economics, and brought up with great faith in anything labelled scientific, who do not easily realize that the peasant has a sense of security in his very insecurity. She further maintains 'that insecurity is the thing he knows, and he understands it in so far as he has always lived with it and adjusted his practices and his ideas in relation to it'.[1]

These remarks about some of the traditional ways of life in the village are only explanations of certain social facts and imply no value judgment. As Nadel maintains, the social enquirer at some stage in his analysis inevitably turns into a social philosopher and 'must posit absolute aims or purposes, and some self-reliant worthwhileness of actions, since without these assumptions his subject matter simply makes no sense'.[2] We believe that change there can be, and ought to be. But as we have been mainly concerned in this thesis with the analytical and explanatory and not the evaluative categories of enquiry, there is no point in dwelling on the latter here.

This study provokes also a comment concerning the generalization made about the nature of the face-to-face relations in a simple society and the value concepts attached to them. Some sociologists have maintained that, because of the integration of such societies, personal relations are smooth and intimate, and perhaps attractive, contrasted with the discontents of civilization and its disorganizing forces.[3] This seems to be another type of generalization similar to that refuted by anthropologists with regard to the groupistic and individualistic nature of behaviour amongst primitive and peasant societies.

In spite of his emphasis on the group behaviour of the Arab fellaheen, and on the importance of appealing to the whole community, Tannous also mentions incidents of rivalry, conflict, and competition among them.[4] In this study we have noted how the constituent social units of this community give rise to tendencies of conflict and rivalry. It has been shown how the susceptibility to friction in this community's culture finds in the early stimulation of sibling rivalry one of its supporting forces. Both solidarity and friction are cultural expectations among siblings, and this reflects itself in the village structure as well as in its structural relations with the rest of the G'afra villages. It seems that the equilibrium of the community is maintained through an elaborate system of social behaviour

[1] Margaret Read, 'Common Grounds in Community Development Experiments', in *Community Development Bulletin*, Vol. II, June 1951.

[2] S. F. Nadel, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

[3] See Kimball Young, *Social Psychology*, in his distinction between the characteristics of primary and secondary groups. This is also evident in some of Redfield's writings. See also Lewis Mumford, *Techniques and Civilization*, London, 1934.

[4] Afif I. Tannous, 'Extension Work among the Arab Fellahin', in *Farmers of the World*, ed. by Edmund de S. Brunner, Irwin T. Sanders and Douglas Ensminger, New York, 1947 ed., pp. 78–100.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

and reciprocal obligations counterbalancing the competitive tendencies within the community.[1]

The vulnerability to tension and friction not only characterizes the constituent social groupings, but obtains in the realm of the interpersonal relationships. Throughout this work reference has been made to attitudes of reserve, constriction, and suspicion prevailing in personal relations. Hearty laughter is rare, and it usually occurs amongst adults in their sarcastic allusions to others, and in belittling their esteem, while apparently seeming to praise them. Suspicion of the evil intentions of others is institutionalized in the evil eye, seeing potential danger in practically everybody. The small family guards its private affairs with great caution, especially its misfortunes, for fear that others may exult or gloat at their expense, or find some way of attacking their moral integrity. The almost morbid fear of shame, the excessive touchiness, the frequent resort to the use of oaths and swearing, the exaggerated expressions of language, and the scrupulous attitude towards food, are all symptoms of a type of personal relationships which could not legitimately be described as intimate and smooth.[2] The impressions I received from those with whom I came in contact during my field work was that the villagers mutually describe each other as greedy, envious, and malicious and, as they usually put it, 'people would distribute your property while you are alive . . .'

Such character traits cannot be taken, as some psycho-analysts would maintain that they could, as indications of neurotic personalities. They are specific adjustments of individuals, and could be attributed to hard realities of economic life, to historical forces of oppression (which perhaps have made the fellah regard authority, for example, with suspicion) and to certain affective energies resulting from child-rearing practices.

Such character traits, and a climate of uneasiness and tension in the interpersonal relationships, have also been reported among the Navaho Indians and the Tepoztlanians.[3]

In this research the writer has become more than ever convinced of the great value derived from the study of 'personality' in both its social and psychological dimensions. Social norms, value systems, religious beliefs, and status, determine directly and appreciably the social behaviour of the individual and are amongst the most stabilizing factors of personality.[4]

[1] This interpretation is based on M. Fortes' 'Ritual Festivals and Social Cohesion in the Hinterland of the Gold Coast', in *American Anthropologist*, Vol. XXXVIII, 1936, p. 604.

[2] With regard to the exaggerated use of language E. Shouby says: 'Arabs are forced to over-assert and exaggerate in almost all types of communication, as otherwise they stand a good chance of being gravely misunderstood. If an Arab says exactly what he means without the expected exaggeration, other Arabs may still think that he means the opposite.' See his article 'Influence of Arabic Language on Arab Psychology', in *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. V, Summer, 1951, pp. 284–302.

[3] Oscar Lewis, *Life in a Mexican Village*, Chapter XIV.

[4] Audrey I. Richards, in a review of 'Personality in Nature, Society and Culture', in *Man*, January 1951.

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13

Chapter VI

THE VILLAGE AND THE PEASANT COMMUNITY

571 The fellah should always be spoken of in the plural, because he lives always as a member of a group, if not of a crowd. In the fields, as tenant or owner, he works with his wife and children; as a hired labourer, he works in a gang, swinging the *fass* or sowing seed in a concerted rhythm.

Limited as the fellah's horizon may be within the village, he works in the open air and in public more often than in the privacy of his house. The women go in groups to draw water, the children play in swarms, daily life is collective and communal. But to understand the village community, it is necessary first of all to look at the village.

361 137 Seen from outside, as it stands up in the middle of the plain or against the pale background of the desert cliffs, it is a huddled earthy mass, compact but shapeless, and crowned with bundles of brushwood. A whitewashed building, more important than the rest — perhaps a great pigeon-cote or the house of a notable — stands out from the confusion. Palms or acacias, sycamores or *lebbekhs* rise above the mass and relieve its drabness. In the bright light of Egypt these grouped or scattered trees around or in amongst the houses give a fine effect, and Brunhes has devoted a whole page to the picture in his *Géographie Humaine*. It is not for us to imitate him. We must pierce behind this magic veil, which is all that most observers can see, and probe the reality.

361 133 As the villages date from before the period of flood-control, few of them are actually on the Nile banks. Most stand back, at distances from a hundred yards to half a mile away. Others straggle along the edge of the Upper Egyptian desert, or stand huddled on a *kôm or tell*, that is to say the ruins of an ancient village or an artificial mound or dyke. In districts where the Nile flood is no longer to

437 At last business is over. Before sundown, after interminable parleyings, the fellah goes home with goods or money calculated to increase his well-being, or at least with pleasant memories of a day full of sights and sounds.

484 Pilgrimages and markets swell the traffic on the country
571 roads. Here again can be seen the love of the fellaheen for crowding together and moving only in congested groups.

484 If they have to cross the Nile or a canal to reach the village opposite, the fellaheen throng so densely into the
[505 ferry-boat or raft (*ma'adiya*) that accidents are frequent.
292] When they set out on foot or on donkey-back, laden with
494] astonishing bundles, it looks like an evacuation. When for a long journey they take the *trombil* or *halazona* — an old Ford converted into a bus — forty of them push their way in where there is room for only twenty, and they take it very ill if police regulations are enforced. One of the reasons for a certain minister's unpopularity in the country was his insistence on applying these regulations. When they have
[497] to travel by train, they arrive several hours beforehand, cluster on a corner of the platform, and scramble all together into one carriage, even if there is plenty of room elsewhere.

In general, then, the fellaheen like being together, out of doors and in crowds. They are sociable people. But does this mean that they are socially minded? Is there any organic relationship between the members of the peasant group?

361 Let us first of all consider the village as a whole. This
181 with its surrounding land forms a closed system outside which everyone and everything is foreign and unknown. It leads a secluded and individual life, which is organised from within by habits, customs and taboos handed down from the distant past, immemorial laws which rule absolutely the acts and the pleasures of every inhabitant.

181 The fellah finds the same difficulty in widening his out-
219 look in space as in projecting himself into the future and practising foresight. His village is all in all, for it is here and now. It is his country, and the limit of his patriotism.

When a fellah is asked about his nationality, he will reply: "I am from the village of Manfaloot, or Abu Korkas", and occasionally, a little more widely: "I am from the Mudiriya of Menufiya, or Assiut", but rarely, if ever, "I

683 rushed upon the young man. He fell, pierced by several
579 knife wounds. Bakr's men, as soon as they heard of the crime, bore down on the spot with rifles and staves, crying "Allah, Allah!". The others replied with the same cries, and the battle began in earnest. An hour later there were three dead and many wounded. By midnight the two parties, determined to fight to the death, had taken up positions in the hills. The police had the greatest difficulty in restoring order.

186 Race hatred between Arab and fellah, and religious hatred
779 between Copt and Moslem, though lulled by common lives and interests, are never completely extinguished, and furnish the explanation of many a drama.

571 So trust and mistrust persist side by side. The main
181 source of both is the soil, which unites the fellaheen if it is
186 threatened, but divides them as they own or covet it. Thus
[621] the peasant group, united against the outside world, is divided within itself. Patriotism and nationality mean no more to the fellaheen than the ideas of co-operation, public interest, or civic pride. The village in Egypt is not a community in the social sense; it is not an organism, but a mass.

Similarity in their mode of life, and propinquity, do not necessarily create a deep relationship among human beings. A certain spiritual life is needed, or at least a certain personality, to make social relations possible. The fellah appears to be as little of a personality as he is of an individual. Absorbed in the soil, and oppressed by those above him, he lives collectively but not socially. Though living in a herd, he remains solitary and aloof.

This absence of co-ordination among elements in themselves homogeneous has kept the Egyptian village, the typical peasant group, in the primitive state of a conglomeration lacking either material or intellectual system. Through fifty centuries Government after Government has maintained this formlessness, as it greatly strengthens the central authority.

Such are the common features of the fellaheen, and of the 14,000 places in which they live (87).

This mental defect, which is maintained by lack of education, is the cause of his improvidence. The whole year through he will deny himself even necessities ; then the Feast comes, and he spends everything. His whole family enjoys two or three days of excitement — new clothes, rich food, sight-seeing. Then he goes back to his old life poorer than ever. |81 527

Suppose he has a few pounds in hand, which he has earned or borrowed, and his field needs attention. Does he buy tools or good manure to increase its yield ? No, he will run further into debt to purchase the adjoining lot, to own a little more, to seem less of a smallholder. And when the time comes to repay ? Sufficient unto the day... |81 |85 423

The housewife never trims her lamp until it is already dark. The ploughman never greases his plough until he begins work. He pays his debts when he is forced to, buys seed on the eve of sowing, sends for the doctor when there is no more hope. He is improvidence incarnate. |83

Maqrîzi, writing in the fourteenth century, notes this shortsightedness. "One side of the Egyptian character is never to take thought for the future. The Egyptians never store up provisions like the inhabitants of other lands. Another of their characteristics is the absence of reflection. My friend Sheikh Ibn Khaldoun used to say : 'The Egyptians act as if no day of reckoning would ever come'." |81 |85

It is a fact that they neither think nor act except as the occasion demands, according to the pressure felt at the actual moment. Their reaction is determined by immediate sensation. This is why they are at the same time trustful and mistrustful, individualistic and gregarious, miserly and thriftless, patient and fiery-tempered. |81

They show a trust amounting to credulity in sacred things or persons able, as they think, to fulfil their desire for children, revenge or health. Their innumerable superstitions, the prestige enjoyed by ministers of the cult, and the success of pious-seeming impostors are all signs of this unbelievable credulity. |81 771

At the same time they habitually mistrust one another, even within the same family. Their master they mistrust even when he does well by them. They are like children too often deceived and stinted, who suspect everybody else of being jealous of the little they have. This is the root of their belief in the Evil Eye. |81 571 578 754